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RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000978

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BRUSSELS FOR USEU ATIDBALL  
HQ SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
DEPT PASS TO AID/OTI RPORTER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/17/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: EU PLANS RESPONSE TO RCTV CLOSURE

REF: A. CARACAS 907

[1](#)B. CARACAS 949

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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT DOWNES FOR 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The international protest against the closure of independent media outlet Radio Caracas Television (RCTV) may be aided if the European Union (EU), which has so far been quiet, adds its voice to the chorus of dissent. Five EU Parliamentarians will visit Venezuela May 16-18 and are expected to issue a statement criticizing the BRV's decision. The visit will reportedly be followed by separate EU Parliament and European Council statements close to RCTV's May 27 closure date. The EU appears to be planning on a mildly critical statement, combined with an offer to assist setting up the BRV-controlled replacement for RCTV. The BRV will focus on the offer of assistance as evidence of the EU acceptance of the BRV's action. End Summary.

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RCTV's International Campaign Bears Some Fruit  
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[1](#)2. (C) European Union First Secretary Denis Daniilidis shared with Poloff on May 14 the EU Parliament and European Council's plans to respond to the BRV's imminent closure of Radio Caracas Television (RCTV). As a result of RCTV owner Marcel Granier and opposition Primero Justicia leader Julio Borges' April 24 meeting in Strasbourg (Ref A), a group of five EU Parliamentarians representing the European Partido Popular (Christian Democratic party, EPP) will visit Venezuela May 16-18. They have asked for appointments with Vice President Rodriguez; the Foreign, Information, and Telecommunications Ministries; the National Assembly; and the Supreme Court. While their focus will be RCTV, they will meet with opposition political parties and civil society groups as well. Daniilidis said the group will likely issue a statement in support of RCTV toward the end of the visit. Daniilidis expects the BRV will probably try to dismiss their criticism because it comes from the right. However, he said the EU Parliament will also be issuing a statement, which will be harder for the BRV to dismiss as it will be supported by the left-leaning European Socialist and Liberal parties. Local daily El Universal reported May 15 that the EPP and Socialist parties are preparing a parliamentary resolution.

[1](#)3. (C) According to Daniilidis, EU member states are also currently drafting a European Council statement regarding the

BRV's anti-RCTV decision. Since the concession ends on May 27, which is a Sunday, Daniilidis thought both statements would likely be released on May 28, when the BRV's public programming is set to launch. The statement will consist of four parts:

- acknowledgment of the BRV's sovereign decision;
- a strong statement on the importance of preserving freedom of expression;
- a strong statement expressing hope that the redistribution of RCTV's concession will be transparent and impartial; and,
- an offer of assistance. In relation to this last point, Daniilidis said EU member countries are planning a series of public workshops to discuss differences among European models of public television.

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Preparing for Rocky Times Ahead  
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14. (C) Daniilidis thought the statements from the EU--which has so far been quiet on this and other BRV anti-democratic actions--would come as quite a blow to the BRV and prompt the increasingly thin-skinned administration to retaliate. He noted that as international outcry against the RCTV decision has increased, the BRV has played up their support from the EU and rewarded member states with better treatment, including granting requests for official appointments. Daniilidis also said that during the May 5 dinner with the BRV's European ambassadors (Ref B), Vice Minister for Europe Rodrigo Chaves repeatedly emphasized Europe's strategic importance to Venezuela. During an interview on state television during the same weekend, Venezuela's Ambassador to the EU praised the bloc for "never criticizing" and "always understanding" the BRV.

15. (C) Aside from the RCTV issue, Daniilidis saw other reasons for a potential deterioration in EU-BRV relations.

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The EU has been concerned about recent threats to its most prominent investments following Chavez' May 1 "nationalization" of the Faja heavy oil strategic associations, which affected French oil company Total, and his May 4 threat to nationalize private banks, two of the largest of which are Spanish-owned. (Note: In addition to Total, BP is also involved in negotiations over the forced migration of the Faja strategic oil associations. ENI, the Italian oil company, is also involved in negotiations on the forced migration of the Coro Coro oil project, and has a pending arbitration claim against the BRV over the expropriation of the Dacion oil field.) Daniilidis also mused speculatively about changing dynamics in some member state capitals that could negatively affect the relationship. For example, he guessed newly-elected French President Nicolas Sarkozy would be more "pro-actively" anti-BRV than his predecessor. In Spain, Daniilidis thought that opinion within the Socialist Party (PSOE) was turning against Chavez, which might result in a more hard-line replacement for Spanish Ambassador Morodo, who leaves this summer. Daniilidis thought the Italian Ambassador, who has reportedly acted against his government's orders in developing a close relationship with the BRV and has been known at times to divulge sensitive EU conversations on Venezuela to the BRV, would also be replaced with someone less pro-BRV.

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Comment  
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16. (C) We would advise against overstating the potential impact of what may be a mildly critical EU statement on the RCTV issue on the BRV. Any comment would likely come late or just after the event, and the EU's offer to assist in the BRV's plans for the new station would blunt any criticism--and would be seized by the BRV as evidence of the

EU's "acceptance" of the closure of RCTV.

WHITAKER